POLI 343: Media and Politics

Andrew Menger

Spring 2018

Course Information

Class Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:30 - 3:45 PM
Classroom: Herzstein 211

Contact Information

Instructor: Andrew Menger
Office: Herzstein 206 (at the top of the stairs by the lecture hall)
Email: amm17@rice.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3 - 6 PM and by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the relationships between the media, political institutions, and the American public. In this course, we will examine these relationships from several perspectives. First, we will focus on the way media organizations operate in the United States and compare their ownership to other systems. We will also examine how the structure of American media shapes its coverage of issues and campaigns. Next we will examine how the media covers different political institutions in America, including all three branches of the federal government as well as foreign policy and local politics. After this, we will dive into the research on audience effects– how media content and messages influence the mass public. This includes opinions, attitudes, knowledge, learning, socialization, involvement with civil society, and political behavior. Finally, we will investigate how the ongoing changes to the media landscape influence the messages media audiences receive, the manner in which they are received, and their impacts.

Required Texts and Materials

Graber, Doris A. and Johanna L. Dunaway. 2017. *Mass Media and American Politics*, Tenth Edition, CQ Press.

Ridout, Travis N. 2013. *New Directions in Media and Politics*, Routledge Press.

Exams, Projects, and Papers

Each student will be responsible for writing three (3) short response papers over the semester relating to readings from classes for that day. Students will choose which particular classes they want to write these papers for, but each student must complete three by the end of the semester. These short essays will address one or more readings from the syllabus and will respond to the articles in substantively meaningful ways. The approach of these papers is flexible; they can argue for or against a certain article's theory, compare different theories or approaches to each other, apply a theory to a current topic, or connect an article to material from a previous class in the semester. There response papers should be at least three double-spaced pages in length, and I expect to see analysis, interpretation, or application– not summaries of the readings. Students will be given a chance to re-do any paper that doesn't meet the standards. These response papers will count for 15% of your final grade.

Students will be assigned groups to work with to prepare two group presentations over the semester. These presentations will augment the course material by focusing and expanding on particular case studies, theories, or topics. I will provide more information on the expectations for these presentations as the semester progresses. Each presentation will count for 15% of your final grade, for 30% total.

There will be a midterm exam on Thursday, March 8th worth 20% of your final grade. This exam will consist of short written answer questions and one or two essays. The exam will be conducted during our normal class period.

This class also includes a major paper assignment, which will count as the final exam for this class and will be due at the end of the assigned final exam period. This paper will count for 25% of your final grade. As the semester progresses I will provide more information and instructions on this assignment, and I will meet with each of you one-on-one to make sure your topic and approach are appropriate.

Grade Policies

Final grading is based on the following formula:
Presentations: 30% (averaged from 2 presentations)
Midterm Exam: 20% Final Paper: 25%
Response Papers: 15% (averaged from 3 papers)
Participation: 10%

IMPORTANT NOTE: Even if you are taking this class pass-fail, I expect you to complete all assignments. Therefore, in order to receive a passing final grade, you must complete all assignments including the response papers and adequate in-class participation. I will be the judge of whether an assignment was adequately completed (a one-sentence response paper will not count!).

Participation Note: This class will be more enjoyable if it fosters lively conversations rather than you just listening to me talk! To encourage everyone to engage in class discussions, I am counting participation as 10% of your final grade. Your participation grade will be based on providing meaningful contributions to class discussions. For those who don't feel comfortable talking in class, I will provide alternatives for you to share your views through Canvas. However, you must be present in class on a regular basis to listen to and participate in the discussions.

I reserve the right to administer pop quizzes in future classes if it becomes obvious that y'all aren't doing the readings. Trust me, neither of us want that– just read and participate in discussions and we can both be spared the trouble!

Classroom Etiquette Policy

Political science is positive exercise, not a normative one. This is to say, we are interested in what is– not what should be, and while the former has implications for how to bring about the latter, the goal of this class is not to debate the merits of any particular political opinion. That being said, politics is the process through which disagreements are settled and some of you may feel strongly about some of the disagreements that will come up in this class. Our classroom will contain students who have lived different life experiences, who espouse different perspectives, and who have different ways of defending these perspectives. In order to take full advantage of this diversity it is essential that we conduct all of our discussions in a respectful manner. To this end I ask all of you to state your opinions clearly and respectfully, to listen to and hear one another, and to speak to me if you are offended by something said in class.

Additional Class Policies

1. You should complete all assigned readings before coming to class. Please be prepared to summarize and discuss the assigned readings during class. Take careful notes while reading the materials and write down any questions and comments that you would like to discuss in class. If it becomes clear that y'all aren't doing the readings, I reserve the right to administer pop quizzes in future classes.

2. Please place all cell phones on silent during class and keep them put away during the class period. Please do not record audio or video of classes without my permission.

3. PLEASE READ THE GRADING POLICY. In order to pass this class, all students must complete every assignment, even if by the grading scale they would have a passing final grade without it.

4. This syllabus is only a guide for the course and assignments are subject to change (with sufficient advance notice). Readings listed as "TBD" will be assigned as the semester progresses.

Rice Honor Code

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

Disability Support Services

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Support Services (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Course Schedule

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

Introduction and syllabus

Thursday, January 11, 2018

General overview: Media power & government control
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 1
Ridout Ch. 1
Lasswell, Harold. 1969. "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society." In *Mass Communications*, ed. Wilbur Schramm. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

NO CLASS– ICE STORM

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Media ownership & regulation
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 2
Dunaway, Johanna. 2013. "Media Ownership and Story Tone in Campaign News Coverage." *American Politics Research* 41: 24-53.

Hanretty, Chris. 2014. "Media Outlets and their Moguls: Why Concentrated Individual or Family Ownership is Bad for Editorial Independence." *European Journal of Communication* 29(3): 335-350.

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Press freedom & the law
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 3
Freedom House, "Freedom of the Press 2017," available at:
https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2017
Naim, Moises and Philip Bennett. 2015. "The Anti-Information Age: How Governments are Censoring in the 21st Century." Atlantic, February 16, 2015. Available at:
https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/02/government-censorship-21st-century-internet/385528/

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Changing Media Landscape
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 4
Ridout Ch. 3
Barthel, Michael. 2016. "5 key takeaways about the State of the News Media in 2016." Pew Research Center FacTank. Available at: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/15/state-of-the-news-media-2016-key-takeaways/

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Changing Media Landscape (continued)
Ridout Ch. 2
Ridout Ch. 6

Thursday, February 1, 2018

News Making & Reporting Routines
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 5
Lindner, Andrew. 2017. "Editorial gatekeeping in citizen journalism." *new media & society* 19(8): 1177-1193.

Tuesday, February 6, 2018

The Media as Policy Makers
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 6
Nisbet, Matthew, Dominique Broussard, and Adrianne Kroepsch. 2003. "Framing Science: The Stem Cell Controversy in an Age of Press/Politics." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 8: 36-70.

Thursday, February 8, 2018 - NO CLASS

Tuesday, February 13, 2018

First group presentations: Political Media in US vs. Other Countries

Thursday, February 15, 2018

White House Coverage
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 7
Ridout Ch. 11

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

Congressional Coverage
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 8
Ridout Ch. 10

Thursday, February 22, 2018

Judicial Coverage
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 8
TBD

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

Foreign Affairs Coverage
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 9
Ridout Ch. 5

Thursday, March 1, 2018

Local & State Coverage
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 8
Ridout Ch. 4

Tuesday, March 6, 2018

Review for Midterm Exam

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Midterm Exam

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 - NO CLASS

Thursday, March 15, 2018 - NO CLASS

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Audience Effects
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 11
TBD

Thursday, March 22, 2018

Audience Effects
Ridout Ch. 12
TBD

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

Biases in Campaign Coverage
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 13
Ridout, Ch. 9

Thursday, March 29, 2018

Negativity & Targeting in Campaigns
Ridout Ch. 7
Ridout Ch. 8

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

Campaigns in a Digital Age
Graber & Dunaway Ch. 12
Ridout Ch. 6

Thursday, April 5, 2018

No Class– I will be at a conference

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

3rd group presentations: TBD

Thursday, April 12, 2018

3rd group presentations: TBD

Tuesday, April 17, 2018

Current trends & future directions

Graber & Dunaway Ch. 14
Dunaway, Johanna. 2016. "Mobile vs. Computer: Implications for News Audiences and Outlets." Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy. Available at:
https://shorensteincenter.org/mobile-vs-computer-news-audiences-and-outlets/

Thursday, April 19, 2018

Current trends & future directions
Ridout Ch. 13
TBD